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Thinking the Unthinkable

Security Threats, Cross-Border Implications, and Canada's Long-Term Strategies

Danielle Goldfarb

The Backgrounder in Brief

Decision makers and experts consider three security threat situations, the critical vulnerabilities they reveal and their implications for Canada's long-term strategies.

About the Author

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Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, what were once almost unthinkable situations in North America now seem possible, even probable developments. The risk of new attacks is real, though there has not been a robust national discussion in Canada over what security threats entail for public policies in an increasingly integrated North America and world. At the same time, the Canadian government has failed, until recently, to take a leadership role in developing an overarching security framework to guide public policies. Newly installed Prime Minister Paul Martin has pledged to rectify that situation by making a national security policy a priority and by creating Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

This *Backgrounder* provides highlights of a confidential seminar in September 2003, featuring a small group of decision makers and experts from a wide range of disciplines (Box 1). The seminar was part of the Institute's Border Papers series exploring Canada-U.S. economic and security relations.

Rather than simulating or discussing the likelihood of various terrorist scenarios, experts reflected on longer-term implications of various threats for Canada, and what the country's medium- and longer-term strategies ought to be. Participants discussed three situations that were developed by other institutions or have actually taken place.[1]

The first of these, developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), contemplates three simultaneous biological and radiological attacks in the United States. The second, developed by the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, considers a credible but imprecise threat to East Coast energy infrastructure. The third involves the actual case of Ahmed Ressam, who, traveling on a fake Canadian passport, was prevented from entering the U.S. from Canada with explosive materials intended to bomb the Los Angeles airport.

The scenarios revealed critical Canadian vulnerabilities, including infrastructure at risk, as well as communication and information-sharing gaps in the country's national, cross-border and other international networks. Overall, the group took the view that Ottawa must engage Canadians in a robust national discussion about security policy and create a national security framework to direct and coordinate security policies across government. Participants emphasized that assessing and reacting to security threats will require unprecedented levels of cooperation both inside of Canada — within governments, across levels of government, and between government and the private sector — and across borders. Though participants warned that Canada should be cautious about adopting the DHS model, Ottawa needs a focal point for security issues to enable it to better coordinate federal activities, liaise with other levels of government, generate timely and innovative policy ideas, and interact with the U.S. and other

1 Scenarios were also selected in order to encourage discussion of implications in different areas. No pre-developed situations considered Canada directly to be a primary target, so none were pursued in this seminar, though participants raised the possibility in the discussions. The Rand Corporation, U.S. government departments, and the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, with cooperation from the Canadian Department of National Defence, have developed other situations.

Box 1: *List of Participants**

Thomas Axworthy, Historica Foundation

Michael Bliss, University of Toronto

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Kevin Doyle, C.D. Howe Institute

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James Scala, Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, Department of National Defence, Government of Canada

Jeffrey Schott, Institute for International Economics, Washington

John Thompson, The Mackenzie Institute

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* I wish to thank participants, as well as a number of government officials and other decision makers who were unable to attend the seminar, for reviewing and commenting on a previous draft of this *Backgrounder*. Every attempt was made to capture the essence of the discussions, subject to editorial discretion.

countries. At the same time, decision makers must carefully balance security needs against other national interests.

Situations

1. Biological and Radiological Attacks in the U.S.

In this exercise, three coordinated attacks take place over the course of four days.[2] The first is a biological attack in Chicago. Terrorists covertly release a version of the pneumonic plague in an airport washroom before a flight takes off for Vancouver, at a train station and at a hockey game. Several people subsequently show up in Vancouver with flu-like symptoms, and British Columbia health officials notify Health Canada about an unidentified illness. The media report the outbreak as travelers' flu. When some patients die overnight, British Columbia health officials and Health Canada announce that there is a pneumonic plague in Vancouver and speculate about a bio-terrorist attack. The Vancouver situation is then linked to Chicago, where thousands of people have fallen ill. The media report the worst bio-terrorist attack in history. The international community bans flights originating in Canada. The federal health department's staff and other officials refuse to work because of possible risks.

The second attack is a "dirty bomb" explosion in Seattle. The media report a radiological attack. Traffic at the border grinds to a halt as people flee Seattle and border agents increase security to deter terrorists from crossing in either direction. In the third part of the scenario, the intelligence community discovers a ship is missing, and later realizes that the vessel poses a possible radiological threat. The ship is eventually located, monitored by the Canadian Department of National Defence (DND), then torpedoed and sunk.

2. A Credible Threat to U.S. Energy Infrastructure

In this exercise, the U.S. faces an imprecise but credible threat of attack on its energy and energy-related infrastructure on the East Coast.[3] More than 2,000 important infrastructure elements are possible targets, including nuclear power plants, refineries, large liquefied natural gas storage operations, pipeline infrastructure, petroleum terminals, chemical operations and dams. The mode of attack is unclear. The president meets with his National Security Council and decides not to take specific protective measures, but raises the alert level from yellow to orange based on a somewhat credible, non-specific threat.

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2 Congress mandated this May 2003 exercise — called TOPOFF-2 — which was the largest counter-terrorist exercise in North America. The U.S. DHS developed it, along with the U.S. Department of Justice. As part of a Smart Border Declaration to conduct joint exercises, the United States asked Canada to participate. The State Department designed the international portion of the exercise. Canada's Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIPEP) in the Department of National Defence, and the Department of the Solicitor General led Canada's participation, which included 18 federal departments and a group from British Columbia.

3 The exercise — called Silent Vector — was developed by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and carried out in October 2002.

A plane, off course, then crashes near the Harrisburg, Pa., nuclear power plant. It is unclear if this is related to the threat. The president decides to shut down general aviation — not ground transportation — for 48 hours. No energy-related attack takes place on the day in question. Though the National Security Council is unaware of it, the shutdown of general aviation, combined with inclement weather and a bad case of nerves, disrupted the terrorists' plans, which included a two-plane assault and a coordinated ground attack. The episode illustrates the difficulties in coping with a credible warning of a terrorist attack, without sufficient information for effective prevention.

3. Organizing in Canada for Attacks in the U.S.: the Ressam Case

The third scenario was the case of Ahmed Ressam who, while living in Canada, planned a bomb attack on Los Angeles airport in 1999.

Ressam was born in Algeria, then moved to France and eventually to Canada, where he applied for refugee status. He lived in a building that housed the Montreal part of an Algerian terrorist organization known as the Armed Islamic Group, or GIA, which is connected to al-Qaeda. According to his testimony, he supported himself by robbing tourists, bank fraud, and collecting welfare payments. When he was denied refugee status because he had a criminal background, he assumed a new identity by filling in the blanks of a stolen Quebec baptismal certificate with the alias "Benni Antoine Noris" and used it to obtain a Canadian passport.

In 1998, Ressam was recruited for a terrorist mission and went to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. His handlers assigned him to a five-member, European-based Algerian cell. The cell members planned to travel separately and meet in Canada. Ressam re-entered the country on his Canadian passport under the name of Benni Noris. Authorities stopped some members of his cell in Europe; however, Ressam decided to continue with the operation. With some help from other associates, he prepared explosives and gathered bomb-making material. When Ressam crossed into the U.S. on his way to LAX, a U.S. customs agent discovered more than 100 pounds of explosives in his car. U.S. customs officials contacted the RCMP and Ottawa identified him as Ressam. His arrest led to a high state of alert at the Canada-U.S. border, the cancellation of Seattle millennium activities, and continuing international investigations.[4] The arrest increased U.S. suspicions that Canada's refugee system and security policies are flawed.

Where the Weak Spots Are

Participants' discussion of the three situations, combined with actual events, revealed important vulnerabilities and raised serious questions about Canada's strategies in an increasingly integrated North America and world. These actual events included the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the 2003 power blackout affecting

4 For more information on the case, see PBS' "Trail of a Terrorist" at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/trail/inside/cron.html.

Ontario and parts of the U.S. northeast, including New York City, the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in an Alberta cow in May 2003[5] and the widespread impacts of the SoBig and Blaster computer viruses. Repercussions on both sides of the border flowed from these experiences, demonstrating the high degree of integration, on more than a trade dimension, between Canada and the U.S.

The discussions revealed that Canadians are potentially vulnerable to direct attacks within the country. They are also susceptible to the outcome of attacks in the U.S. and to negative U.S. perceptions that may lead to the closure of the Canada-U.S. border or otherwise harm their ability to do business with, travel to, or get help from the United States.

Possibility of Direct Attack on Canada

Canadians do not tend to view their country as a primary target for terror attacks. As participants noted, however, reports from the interrogation of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, apparently the mastermind behind the September 11, 2001, attacks, make dramatically clear that al-Qaeda is still actively looking to strike U.S., western and Israeli targets around the world. One participant emphasized that Canada is now on the hit lists of both the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah and of al-Qaeda. Because Canada exports more energy to the United States than the U.S. receives from Saudi Arabia, a participant noted that al-Qaeda will hardly have failed to notice that an attack on Canadian production and distribution systems would severely disrupt U.S. economic activity. On the other hand, another participant reported that Ahmed Ressam said that he did not select secondary Canadian targets for attack because Canadian authorities generally did not bother him as he organized for his primary target in the U.S.

Lack of Domestic Capacity

The first scenario, an attack in the U.S. that affected Canada, led some participants to point out Canada's possible lack of domestic capacity to produce antidotes quickly enough in the event of the plague. According to participants, Canada has a national emergency supply stockpile spread across the country. Provinces also have stockpiles of antibiotics. In some cases, however, antidotes do not have a long shelf life and cannot be stored. According to a participant, Health Canada's plans for pandemics allow a few months of lead time to increase the supply of antidotes as an outbreak moves around the world. Some participants argued that that planning is unhelpful in the case of a terrorist attack, where Canada would need to rely on imports to make up any shortfall. The country would then be vulnerable because its closest source of production, the United States, is likely to close its border to exports of significant drugs to provide for its own needs first.

One person noted that a similar issue arises with respect to Canada's blood supply; Canada does not have a domestic blood plasma fractionation[6] capacity.

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5 This was followed by the December 2003 discovery in the U.S. of BSE, in a cow confirmed to have come from Alberta.

6 Fractionation is the process for separating blood into important component parts.

During the first Gulf War, the United States embargoed all exports of blood plasma, which is permissible under its domestic legislation.

Weaknesses in Marine Security

Several participants commented on the vulnerability of North American ports, highlighted by the radiological attack in the first scenario. Port authorities currently screen only a small percentage of goods arriving and, in any event, do not have equipment to identify biological weapons, though all marine ports do have some radiological detection equipment.[7] During the simulation of the radiological attack, the Port Authority considered shutting down the port, which would have had severe economic consequences. Some people also mentioned the presence of organized crime in Canadian sea ports and, increasingly, at airports.

Several participants pointed to vulnerabilities in international shipping. Many vessels use flags of convenience — that is, flags of a country other than their own — to take advantage of tax rates, cheap labour, and little oversight. In many places, the ship's owner and contents are unknown.[8] This is not a hypothetical danger: according to one participant, al-Qaeda ran shipping fleets in Sudan, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam also ran a shipping line (Winchester, 1998).

Possibility of Work Refusals

When the DHS simulated the bioterror attack, participants raised concerns that border officials might refuse to work if not given antibiotics or appropriate safety equipment to deal with biological and radiological risks.[9] Seminar participants noted that this could increase Canada's vulnerability to disruptions at the border in the event of a security threat or attack, possibly grinding cross-border transportation to a halt and, for example, severely disrupting just-in-time deliveries. Employees refusing to work if they do not have the proper equipment could extend, participants noted, beyond border officials to others, including port and health workers.

Critical Infrastructure at Risk

The second scenario exposed vulnerabilities in the highly integrated North American energy infrastructure. The developers of the situation identified pipelines, refineries, ports, drilling rigs, and nuclear installations, especially reactors, as the key exposed facilities. Some participants noted that the safety measures originally put in place by the private sector were intended to protect against accidents, natural disasters and crime, rather than terrorists. Another individual pointed out that a number of private-sector owners and operators have taken extraordinary measures or are now required to take measures to prepare for terrorism. For example, the Alberta government and its energy sector have worked

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7 The CCRA also recently purchased 11 mobile VACIS units that identify anomalies and will be installed at strategic ports of entry across Canada.

8 For a discussion on crimes under flags of convenience see Richardson (2003).

9 During the simulation, Health Canada gave border officials information on the risks, and no work refusal occurred.

together on a major counter-terrorism initiative.[10] Also, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has imposed new security standards on nuclear facility operators.[11]

One participant added that critical and vulnerable infrastructure extends beyond energy to finance, transportation, telecommunications, food and emergency services, as well as public and animal health, among other areas.

Inability to Segment Markets

Another vulnerability raised by a participant is Canada's inability to segment its market by region or product in some sectors in the event of a crisis. In the case of one cow in Alberta infected with BSE in May 2003, the U.S. closed its borders to all Canadian cattle and beef, leading to a chain reaction in international markets.[12]

Different Approaches in Canada and the U.S.

Differences in Canadian and U.S. responses to bio-terror attacks raise another possible exposure. In the biological attack plot, for example, U.S. health officials planned to give antibiotics to three million people in the Chicago area. Participants noted that Health Canada, rather than providing mass prophylaxes, would have used a more concentrated, targeted approach. The judgment of the participants was that Canadians would be outraged at receiving what seemed like inferior treatment.

Negative U.S. Perceptions

Several participants noted that Canada is also vulnerable to U.S. perceptions, which can translate into security policies affecting Canada-U.S. trade. The chance arrest of Ahmed Ressam bolstered the prevalent U.S. perception that there are gaping holes in the Canadian security net. Many commentators in the counter-terrorism field, both in the U.S. and outside, criticize Canada's refugee determination policy, one participant said. Others noted that until Canada addresses that process, it will be open to the perception that Ottawa fails to take security seriously and U.S. policies will reflect this.

One participant argued that the 2003 arrest in Canada of 19 men under Canada's new immigration laws, which allow detention on the grounds of threats to national security — for which there was inadequate evidence in this case (Jimenez et al, 2003) — also reflects badly on Canada. These arrests reinforce, through coverage in the New York Times (Krauss, 2003) and other leading U.S. publications, a commonly held U.S. view that Canada is a haven for terrorists.

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10 See "Counter-terrorism conference hears of threat to province's oil and gas industry". Fall 2002. http://www4.gov.ab.ca/just/pub/JustIN/fall2002/page 19.htm.

11 See Backgrounder on Proposed Amendments to the Nuclear Security Regulations. 2003. http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/eng/licensees/regulations/nsr_backgrounder.cfm.

12 The U.S. has since opened its border partly to allow meat cuts from younger animals, though the situation was exacerbated by the December 2003 finding that a cow in the U.S., originally from Alberta, was infected with BSE.

Canada, some participants noted, ignores these perceptions at its peril and must be doubly careful how others view its actions.

A related vulnerability mentioned by participants is that Canada is often not considered in U.S. policy discussions or in scenarios that have critical cross-border implications. For example, the second situation of a threat to vital energy infrastructure did not include Canadian participation.

Gaps in Cooperation

Following discussion of the scenarios, many participants expressed the view that Canada is exposed to risks because of critical gaps in both national and international cooperation that make it difficult to respond quickly and effectively.

In terms of cooperation within the federal government, the first scenario highlighted the importance of linkages between health and customs officials. At the beginning of the simulation, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) immediately required information from Health Canada on how to protect employees in order to avoid having to close the border because of work refusals. In the case of the SARS outbreak, one participant said that health officials did not have enough previous links with security officials to enable them to determine quickly whether terrorism was involved.

Participants commented that the first scenario reinforced the need for cooperation across all government levels. British Columbia health officials, the RCMP and Health Canada worked together to track down the source of the disease. Others emphasized that the SARS epidemic showed a significant break-down in relations between federal and provincial public-health officials,[13] though one participant disagreed.

Most expressed the view that there are still important gaps in Canada-U.S. networks, though cross-border cooperation has improved, partly as a result of the outbreak of SARS and the signing of the Smart Border Declaration. Working-level officials at the CCRA and its U.S. counterparts have established good connections. For example, when the U.S. switches its colour-coded alert level, it notifies a Canadian official, which sets in motion a variety of Canadian activities. In the wake of the outbreak of SARS, Health Canada and the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control also strengthened their relationship. During simulation of the first situation, Health Canada worked closely with the CDC and the office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIPEP) worked well with the DHS. CSIS, the RCMP and the FBI have long-established relationships.[14] Some participants noted that cross-border links between other officials who do not have

13 The government advisory committee report on SARS notes that "only weak mechanisms exist in public health for collaborative decision making or systematic data-sharing across governments. Furthermore, governments have not adequately sorted out their roles and responsibilities during a national health crisis....The SARS outbreak has highlighted many areas where inter-jurisdictional collaboration is suboptimal; so far from being seamless, the public health system showed a number of serious gaps." (Health Canada, 2003).

14 Since the seminar took place, the case of Maher Arar, the Canadian citizen who U.S. officials sent to Syria based on information from the RCMP, has raised concern in Canada about Canada-U.S. information sharing. However, at a recent meeting Prime Minister Martin and President Bush agreed to notify each others' officials prior to taking such action.

to work together as frequently are not as robust. There is, more than one person commented, a lack of overall coordination.

Beyond links with the U.S, some participants said that gaps remain in Canada's international security relations, as well, though the Ressam case, the 2001 terrorist attacks, and the SARS outbreak closed these fissures somewhat. One example given was that Canada does not have a mutual legal assistance treaty with all countries,[15] making it more difficult for Canadian authorities to conduct investigations with international aspects; such a treaty between Canada and the U.S. was critical in the Ressam case.

Addressing Vulnerabilities

In the face of possible security threats in an increasingly integrated North America and world, what are Canada's best medium- and long-term strategies to address them?

Responses to Date

Participants mentioned a number of ways in which the Canadian government has addressed vulnerabilities in recent years. For example, the 1999 Ressam case prompted a shift to a much larger, integrated team, including customs, intelligence, immigration and others, to respond to the investigation and all of its international threads. The Ressam case also made it more difficult to obtain a passport: an individual can no longer use a baptismal certificate as proof of citizenship.

Participants commented on some of the changes since the September 11, 2001, attacks. Before that time, there was no institutional security structure at the federal cabinet level. After the attacks, the new Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee on Public Security and Anti-Terrorism coordinated Canada's domestic and international response. Ottawa froze terrorist finances and began to assess critical infrastructure frailties. The government also reviewed existing and pending legislation to identify holes in Canada's security net, leading to the introduction of new legislation to update outmoded laws and close loopholes. This included Bill C-36, which contains provisions allowing for electronic surveillance. A member of OCIPEP is now stationed in the Washington Embassy, one participant noted.

Members of the group pointed out that government actions also included the announcement of new security-related investments in the December 2001 budget, as well as the Smart Border Accord, which put into place measures to facilitate low-risk traffic and improve security. The two countries are moving to joint inspection zones in seaports, and Canada has announced a package of marine-security measures, including scanners for containers and additional screening for dockworkers and crews. Airport security check-in has been tightened, with checked baggage examined, though it will not be fully monitored until 2006.

15 Such a treaty allows authorities in one country to locate and gather evidence for criminal investigations at the request of authorities from the other. Canada does not have a mutual legal assistance treaty with Algeria, for example.

Canada has also introduced a permanent resident card and a new passport with enhanced security features. At the same time, the government set up the Air Transport Security Authority, responsible for security screening at designated airports.

A new, comprehensive approach

Despite the adoption of new security measures in the past few years, the group generally expressed the view that Canada should take a more comprehensive approach. Participants asserted that the country has a major gap in its ability to respond to threats and vulnerabilities: lack of a national security strategy to direct and coordinate policies and operations. The group agreed that leaders must engage the public on security issues and develop a national security framework, while better managing Canada-U.S. security cooperation and striking a balance with other interests. Prime Minister Martin's December 2003 announcement of new Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness,[16] a national security advisor to the prime minister and plans to develop an integrated security and emergencies policy could deal with some of these issues.

A national security strategy

The group said that Canada needs a coherent national security strategy and a national dialogue to shape it. The country has not yet debated its national security policies. Generating a dialogue involves, some noted, addressing the lack of Canadian scholarship and media expertise in security and intelligence issues. It also involves including the private sector. A royal commission, one person suggested, could create the needed discussion. Many participants said that Canada must make a greater commitment to security because the country has depleted all its related assets.

National security strategy scope

Canada should determine the scope of security policy before discussing possible structural changes. Most participants said they preferred a broader policy to include natural disaster management, anti-terrorism, disease control, and management of events such as tainted drinking water, rather than a more limited concentration on anti-terrorism and perhaps natural disasters. Despite the different origins of terrorist attacks and other threats to health and life, on some levels the required responses are similar and point to the need for a highly integrated emergency response capacity. Several participants said that a cross-border security relationship should go beyond border issues to include emergency preparedness, sharing of specialized equipment and scientific expertise. Though the new security environment requires much greater engagement at all levels of government, some

16 A Department of Public Safety existed briefly under the 1993 Kim Campbell government. That department housed customs, immigration, enforcement, RCMP, and the passport office under one deputy minister.

participants noted that a narrower, terrorism-focused approach would mean a greater lead role for the federal government than a broader scope, which would require greater involvement of provincial and municipal governments. The new ministry includes emergency preparedness, crisis management, national security, corrections, policing, oversight, crime prevention and border functions, suggesting that the prime minister plans to define a security strategy in broad terms.

Balance between security and other interests

Participants suggested that Canadians may be willing to pay a high price for security, but not at the expense of those qualities that make the country a desirable place to live. They argued that security must be balanced against other interests, including civil liberties and the economy. In the first two scenarios, decision makers had to decide whether to shut down the port, general aviation, and ground transportation, which would almost certainly cause economic disruption. Decision makers, some participants noted, must ask whether the security threat poses a greater cost than the economic disruption. When giving police forces new tools, or considering such innovations as a national identity card, policy makers must consider the trade-offs between improved security and civil liberties. This raised the related question of how far Canada should go to stop potential terrorist action, given that terrorists will adapt to protective measures.

Government leadership

Prime Minister Martin must make the case that increased public safety is a national preoccupation, several participants said. Still, he must chart a course between taking prudent preparations against risks of real attacks and avoiding measures so restrictive that they create fear, cause significant economic disruption and reduce political freedom. One participant argued that Martin must recognize the importance of intelligence as the first line of defense in counter-terrorism. Canada has to exercise leadership to regain the trust of senior decision makers in the U.S.

In two of the situations, the crisis managers considered the danger that the public's demand for information could lead to inaccurate and alarming media coverage. Participants stressed the need for all three levels of government to reassure the public and make every attempt to provide timely and accurate information.

National and cross-border cooperation

Most members of the group said that assessing vulnerabilities and reacting to threats will require an unprecedented level of cooperation and coordination among all three levels of government and across all ministries and departments. Canada's reactions to U.S. events and its ability to put forward thoughtful and timely proposals to the U.S. are, one member noted, continually hampered by the lack of communication between the levels of government and among departments and ministries at federal and provincial levels.

Canada, the group said, needs seamless cooperation and intelligence exchanges among agencies such as CSIS, the RCMP, CCRA, Immigration, airport and port authorities and local police forces. The country should also have stronger linkages

between counter-terrorism and health officials in order to protect citizens from terrorist activities, some participants said. Government should include groups such as public sector unions, one participant noted, when planning responses and strategies to deal with security threats.

Group members pointed out that governments and the private sector must also work together more effectively because the private sector increasingly plays a national security role. Communication links must be open and efficient during a crisis. Any strategies developed to assess future responses to threats should involve people such as funeral directors, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and pharmacies. The federal government must encourage coordination in the private sector so that it is able to respond with appropriate protective measures to threat information. Conversely, the private sector can provide intelligence to the government.

In terms of increased cross-border cooperation, Ottawa should improve relations with Washington. One participant argued the case for a comprehensive, coordinated Canada-U.S. security framework. Others said that Canada needs its own structures to respond to security and safety threats. For example, one participant argued that Canada needs a national equivalent to the Atlanta-based enters for Disease Control to coordinate policies and emergency responses. Another argued for the CDC to serve both Canada and the U.S., if Canadian interests can be safeguarded. In December 2003, Prime Minister Martin announced the new Canada Public Health Agency to coordinate a national response to health crises.

Canada and the U.S. might also find it useful to pool resources on a discrete set of issues, such as common protocols, communications tools and emergency response software. Canada could also negotiate friendly agreements in advance with the U.S. for medicines and blood products, one participant noted.

Taking the Initiative in Canada-U.S. Relations and Internationally

Several participants argued that Ottawa should take the initiative to bring proposals to Washington that are attractive to both countries.[17] Canada will achieve more of its own objectives, and have more influence, one participant emphasized, if it presents ideas to policy makers in Washington, rather than reacting after U.S. policies have already been announced. Canada's initiative in the Smart Border process, one participant added, resulted in Canada and the U.S. adopting a wise, risk-based approach to security cooperation. Canada has an opportunity to influence U.S. policy. To do this, Ottawa must come up with innovative foreign policy ideas. Canada should, some noted, invest in crucial niches that will give the country influence and access to Washington's capabilities. Several participants argued that Canada needs a broad initiative to get on the U.S. radar screen and marginalize special interests in Congress. However, one

17 Some participants noted that this involves addressing U.S. security interests. One member of the group cited former Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Alan Gottlieb (2003), who wrote: "Canada's stance on security and defense is treated with extreme importance in the White House. It opens doors like no other key. Our willingness to address security issues high on the American agenda could even have a bearing on how a president would deal with an unrelated issue."

participant cautioned against large initiatives and any changes to immigration and refugee policies, and advocated building on current structures, such as the Smart Border Accord.

Although discussions focused by design primarily on Canada-U.S. relations, some participants added that Canada has an important international role to play in combating terrorism. One of them called for Canada to take the lead in developing new international regimes to deal with shipping and flags of convenience. Discussants did not consider other aspects of Canada's international role in detail, though some remarked that part of a longer-term security strategy would involve reviewing the causes of terrorism globally and a potential Canadian role in reducing those.

Organizational Implications

Most participants said that the imperative to coordinate more effectively nationally and internationally, as well as to directing more sustained government attention to security, requires the federal government to establish a focal point for security issues.

Some members argued that consolidating security responsibilities in one agency could improve coordination in Ottawa, and make it easier both for the DHS and the provinces to interact with Ottawa on security issues. It could also have an important cosmetic effect, signaling that Ottawa takes security issues seriously and that there is a coordinated strategy. In the first scenario, which simulated biological and radiological attacks, U.S. officials found it a real asset to have those responsible both for crisis and consequence management under one roof. They were able to act quickly. For example, one official was able to call a snow day in Chicago without consultations, halting the spread of the disease.

On the other hand, many participants cautioned against the DHS model, which, as noted in the Washington Post (Mintz 2003), is currently plagued by bureaucratic problems. They said that those on the front lines of security against terrorism should not be distracted with new reporting structures, new offices and new stationery. One participant said Canada should focus on simple measures rather than embarking on big institutional changes. For example, this person noted that Canada could use Canadian diplomats rather than locally engaged staff at particular foreign embassies where there are documented cases of bribes speeding up visitor visa issuance. A few participants said the Canadian system was working well prior to Prime Minister Martin's arrival and should not be changed.

Most members agreed that while Canada should not replicate the DHS model, the country needs a focal point on security to coordinate agencies within the federal government and to work with the U.S. and other international partners. Some said that such an entity must be put in place for the long-term, hold a weight comparable to the DHS within the Canadian government structure, and serve both to coordinate and direct policies and operations. These features could enable it to gain credibility in Washington and to bring specific ideas to the Americans.

Among other possible responses, participants suggested giving the Secretary to the Cabinet more responsibility for national security. Others proposed increasing the resources and coordinating function of the privcy council office (PCO) to deal

with security issues, though this is problematic because the PCO is currently a relatively small organization that does not have 24-hour capability. Other ideas included beefing up and raising the profile of the solicitor general's department (which now has the lead in domestic counter-terrorism matters), renaming it to better reflect its role and moving OCIPEP from DND to the renamed office. The Prime Minister's recent restructuring made some of these changes, such as moving OCIPEP to the new public safety ministry. Other suggestions included more formal links between Congress and Parliament.

A Canadian foreign intelligence agency?

Participants also discussed the desirability of a Canadian foreign intelligence agency. One participant noted that Ottawa does not have a full-scale capacity to monitor communications between people within and outside Canada. Canada does not have a counterpart agency to the CIA. One participant argued that since agencies sometimes exchange information on a barter basis, this could affect Canada's access to intelligence. The main benefits of a national foreign intelligence agency, another participant added, include the ability to task Canadian agents to collect for specific Canadian requirements and the ability to corroborate intelligence from other sources. Most members of the group argued for the use of existing mechanisms, or for expanding the ability of CSIS to do overseas intelligence work, rather than constructing a new agency which is expensive and would take years to mature.

Conclusions

These scenarios, the vulnerabilities they reveal, and the array of possible Canadian strategies they raise provide a starting point for governments to discuss the consequences of security threats facing Canada. As one participant emphasized: "This is not the time for the country and government to go back to sleep. The risk of new events is real. The adversary is ruthless and patient." The group took the view that Canada has major vulnerabilities — both real and perceived — that it should address by creating a national security framework, establishing a focal point for security to coordinate and direct policy, taking creative proposals to Washington that are in Canadian interests, and carefully balancing security needs against other interests. With limited resources, Canada must make thoughtful contributions to security, defense and intelligence, without jeopardizing those qualities that make it a desirable country in which to live.

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